DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 368 412 JC 940 217

AUTHOR Gmelch, Walter H.
TITLE Five Skills for Becoming a More Effective Team Leader.
PUB DATE Feb 94
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented the International Conference for Community College Chairs, Deans, and Other Instructional Leaders (3rd, Phoenix, AZ, February 23-26, 1994); adapted from "Leadership Skills for Department Chairs" (ED 363 257).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Responsibility; *Administrator Role; Community Colleges; *Department Heads; Interprofessional Relationship; Leaders Guides; *Leadership Qualities; *Leadership Training; Long Range Planning; *Organizational Climate; Organizational Objectives; Professional Development; Teacher Administrator Relationship; Team Training; Teamwork; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

Although 80% of all administrative decisions are made at the department level, many community college department chairs accept their positions without a clear understanding of the demands or training in leadership skills. It is critical to a productive department, however, that chairs possess the leadership skills to shape their departments into academic teams. Developing a team attitude requires passion, commitment and continuing communication with faculty and staff. Specifically, research shows that a collective team climate requires the following characteristics: (1) clearly stated and agreed upon long-term goals; (2) actively involved team members and shared management authority; (3) openly shared information with participative decision-making; (4) a constructive approach to resolving conflict with attention to individual interests; and (5) top priority attention to individual growth and self-development. Rather than doing everything for the department, effective team leaders share management activities by providing direction, strengthening relationships, and encouraging mutual respect. In addition, faculty members should be encouraged to excel in scholarly endeavors at their own initiative, while support staff should be challenged to set their individual goals in line with departmental goals. Chairs should establish an open climate of shared information where conflict leads to collaborative solutions. (Includes a table and graph of the five characteristics of effective departments.) (KP)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED 368 412

1994 International Conference for Community College Chairs & Deans

# Five Skills for Becoming a More Effective Team Leader

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

W. H. Gmelch

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

**Presented by**

**Dr. Walter H. Gmelch**
**Center for the Study of the Department Chair**
**Washington State University**
**Pullman, WA 99164-2136**
**(509) 335-9117**

Material adapted from Leadership Skills for Department Chairs, by W.H. Gmelch and V.D. Miskin, Anker Press, 1993

JC 940 217



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

**Walter H. Gmelch, Ph.D.**
**Chair, Department of Educational Administration**
**Director, Center for the Study of the Department Chair**
**Washington State University**
**Pullman, WA 99164-2136**
**(509) 335-9117**

# Five Skills for Becoming a More Effective Team Leader[1]

## Introduction

Did you accept the position of department chair without leadership training, without a vision for creating tomorrow's program, without a clear understanding of the what it takes to develop a productive department, and without an awareness of the demands on your academic career and personal life? Most chairs do!

These considerations challenge the estimated 9,000 community college department chairs across the country responsible for the management of the *production units* of colleges. Since nearly 80 percent of all administrative decisions in higher education are made at the department level, it becomes imperative that our colleges search for department chairs with a sense of commitment, not just a passing interest, and with leadership ability not just a sense of duty.

Caught between conflicting interests of faculty responsibilities and department administration, chairs face the challenge of merging the individual interests with the department goals. While they champion the values of their faculty, at the same time they must mediate the concerns of administration. "Rooted in the faculty like no other administrator but tied to the administration like no other faculty member, the chair has both an excess and deficiency of identity" (Bennett, 1983, p. 3).

[1] Text adapted from W.H. Gmelch and V.D. Miskin, Leadership Skills for Department Chairs, 1993, Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Co.

## The Call for Department Leadership

The position of chair should resound of leadership, with challenges of developing the department's future and building faculty vitality. The late 1990's promise to be a time of major change for all colleges in the United States. Changing student clientele, disintegrating college curriculum, growing technological changes, and shifting attitudes and practices of faculty represent the forces currently shaping higher education.

Change is inevitable. But the critical question is how well chairs and departments prepare for and position themselves to survive and to succeed. Your success in these changing times requires a clear sense of the future (a focus on what your department can become) and the personal leadership skills to shape your department into a **team**.

The time of "amateur administration" where faculty temporarily step into the administrative rank of department chair has lost its effectiveness. The call for team leadership is real and critical to the future of your college, department and faculty.

This paper addresses the key skills you will need to develop your department into an academic team

## Leadership Skills for Building a Productive Department

As department chair, you have the authority to give direction and make decisions for your faculty and staff. Or do you? You have the right to evaluate personnel and establish programs. Or do you? You have a standing invitation to interact with the dean and other college administrators. Or do you? This position of department chair is a distinction to your academic career. Or is it? Your answer to these questions will depend on how well you understand your role as chair and to what extent you exercise this responsibility.

Deciding who teaches which courses, which programs will be managed by which staff members, who completes which reports, or even how many sections of each class will be offered are <u>not</u> the leadership decisions that elicit the above-mentioned opportunities. While management decisions are important to department operations, the leadership decisions are *sine qua non* to inspire and unite faculty effort and direction.

Leadership is more than department action planning and operational decision-making. Leadership prescribes a longer-term department future to unify staff activity and faculty effort. Department leadership requires an emotional commitment, it demands competence and confidence. There is truth to the saying: "It's difficult to lead a calvary charge if you think you look funny sitting on a horse." Use this conference session to examine your motives for serving, and decide how you can "make a difference" to your department. Take time and devote effort now to begin filling **your** leadership reservoir. Prepare yourself to provide departmental direction, enthusiasm and commitment.

Many recent articles and books on leadership have identified the value of teams and teamwork (Bradford & Cohen, 1984; DeMeuse & Liebowitz, 1981; Gmelch & Miskin, 1993, 1984; Kanter, 1983; Lawler, 1986; Parker, 1991; Sullivan, 1988). One specific study reported that schools using the team management style, out-performed schools organized hierarchically (Chubb, 1988). These and other studies continue to acclaim the virtues of teams and teamwork, but fail to capture the fervor of the concept.

Teams not only add value, they add enjoyment. A team climate in your department will make the day-to-day problems less ascorbic. Your faculty won't always agree with one another, they will have differing interests and may even dislike one another at times. But, one unique characteristic of team process is a mutual respect for each other. Productivity improves with team management, but more importantly, a collective team attitude is exciting, rewarding, collaborative, and enjoyable. However, you may recognize that some realities of academic organizations contradict the team concept:

* Academic departments are typically discipline driven with multiple faculty interests.
* Faculty traditionally give lip service to department concerns but receive recognition toward tenure and promotion for their individual efforts.
* Turbulent and changing environments make short-term goals more realistic than long-term ones.
* Institutional goals are multiple, contradictory, unclear and often imposed.
* Stakeholders and constituents are pluralistic, unpredictable and constantly changing.

These factors won't disappear as you introduce team process, but they will be placed in their proper perspective. While organization realities may not be easily changed, they can, and should, be anticipated. A collective team attitude enhances relationships, both internal and external, and prevents individual faculty from becoming dysfunctional within the department. Academic departments shouldn't build team effort at the expense of, but rather through, individual scholarship and teaching effectiveness.

Developing team attitude remains your responsibility and requires your passion, commitment, and continuing communication to faculty and staff alike. The critical elements for building your department team climate are:

1. understanding the characteristics of an effective team (how you know when you have one).
2. developing the leadership required to encourage team effort (how you influence your faculty in that direction).

**Team Characteristics: Recognizing Team Climate**

Perhaps the best way to recognize team attitude is to understand what a team is **not.** Teams do not require all faculty members to meet together every time a department decision needs to be made. Individual faculty seldom have identical interests and aspirations and they don't even agree with one another much of the time. Academic departments do not require homogeneous team players. In fact, it is the diversity of concerns, ideas and interests that contribute most to department success. Recognizing and encouraging the characteristics of "collective team climate" within your department can encourage individual achievement, improve department scholarship and strengthen your faculty relationships.

The team-building literature is filled with descriptions and explanations of the required, necessary or key "characteristics of effectively functioning teams." Dyer (1977) discusses five team development phases, Gmelch and Miskin (1984) present four principles for productive teams, Larson and DeFasto (1989) identify eight properties of effectively functioning teams, and Parker (1991) lists twelve team characteristics. These and other team effectiveness studies may at first seem to confuse rather than explain or focus on how to build your department team. However, a critical review of the team literature reveals a

common set of "team" attitudes or characteristics. Nearly all team studies agree that the collective team climate requires:

1. clearly stated and agreed upon long-term team goals;
2. actively involved team members and shared management authority;
3. openly shared information with participative decision-making;
4. constructive approach to resolving conflict with attention to individual interests; and
5. top priority attention to individual growth and self-development.

Become familiar with these keys to effective teams by examining the comparisons in Table 1 of the factors for effective department teams versus those in less effective department organizations.

These concepts are most useful when related specifically to your department. The configuration of your faculty, the relationships with and among them, and their individual interests are unique to your department and merit your attention. It's important to feel the "aura" or "spirit" of your whole department. While each factor will vary among individual faculty members, it's helpful to assess the overall "collective team climate" for each key characteristic.

{In the conference session you will complete an exercise by first contrasting each "collective team characteristic" with the "traditional department climate." Also, following a simulation you will review the concepts in Table 1 and assess your overall department practices for each major characteristic.}

Appreciate the value of team relationships as an important (and necessary) first step to department leadership. Influencing faculty and department achievement requires your conscious and active involvement. Team leadership implies a new focus to the traditional concept of department management.

### Team Leadership: Influencing Your Faculty

The day-to-day activities and programs do not reflect the real challenge of department leadership. In fact, allowing faculty and support staff more autonomy in those areas gives your job more focus. Team leaders don't "do"

TABLE 1

# Building Productive Departments

| | Effective Departments | Ineffective Departments |
|---|---|---|
| Goals | •Established and modified to give the best possible match between individual goals and department and university goals<br><br>•Commitment is sought from all members of the department | •Imposed upon the group by the chair<br><br>•Little consideration given to individual or personal goals |
| Decision Making | •Decisions reached by consensus<br><br>•All members are usually in agreement; however, there is little tendancy for those in opposition to just "go along"<br><br>•Disagreements are usually used constructively and formal voting is held to a minimum | •Decisions are made by authority<br><br>•Group discussion or involvement may be solicited but the supervisor makes the final decision<br><br>•Those in opposition are expected to "go along" even though in actual practice they often remain resentful |
| Conflict | •Conflict and controversy are viewed as positive and essential to the problem solving process<br><br>•Disagreements may be frequent and candid, but are also relatively comfortable<br><br>•There is little evidence of personal attack; criticism is constructive and even supportive in nature<br><br>•Conflict is not competitively directed but creatively turned to discovering new alternatives or additional resources | •Conflict is viewed as a destructive barrier to problem solving and is consciously ignored or suppressed<br><br>•Disagreements may be supressed by the supervisor or "resolved" by a majority vote, which leaves a still unconvinced minority<br><br>•Critism is embarassing and tension producing and often leads to accomodation or compromise |
| Leadership | •A shared responsibility<br><br>•All faculty members feel responsible for contributing to the department goals<br><br>•Different members, because of their knowledge or abilities, act as "resource expert" at different times, thus the leadership roles change as the tasks of the department change | •Delegated by position<br><br>•Position determines influence<br><br>•Power is concentrated in authority positions<br><br>•Obedience to authority is the accepted norm |
| Professional Development | •Time and effort is directed toward developing strong interpersonal relationships and building individual problem solving skills<br><br>•Self-actualization is encouraged through achievement of department performance goals<br><br>•Recognition is based on continuous feedback. | •Emphasis is on conformance to "organizational standards" and on group productivity<br><br>•Rewards and discipline are tied to department productivity goals, with little attention to interpersonal relationships or individual skill development |

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

everything for the department, they provide direction, strengthen relationships and encourage mutual respect (Dyer, 1977; Larson & DeFasto, 1989; Lawler, 1986; Miskin & Gmelch, 1985; Parker,1991).

Effective team leaders have a clear role. They continually light the way, and in the process, let all individuals see that they do make a difference. Team leaders don't ignore or attempt to reduce individual differences -- they unify the future by celebrating individual contributions to the department. Figure 1 depicts team leadership as the encompassing support system of the collective department environment. Team leadership not only recognizes, but encourages team process in each major dimension.

**Management**

The key to collective team process is a **sharing** of management activities. Faculty members have individual interests and must be encouraged to excel in their scholarly endeavors and at their own initiative. Your role is discussing, sharing, and guiding these in a manner to best contribute to long-term department direction.

Your support staff, on the other hand, have a more direct responsibility to the department and must be challenged to set their individual goals in line with the broad, but shorter-term department goals.

**Goals**

Focus on the long-term, guiding future expectations and potential of your department. Encourage individual achievement and direction, but insist the initiative remain with each faculty member. Informally and consistently as well as at annual review time, share the over arching department goals with your staff and faculty.

The purpose here is to inspire your faculty to set their own challenges and encourage staff to prepare contributing goals -- all within the parameters of the longer-term, future-oriented team direction.

**Decision-making**

First, establish an open climate of shared information. While it is not practical to send **all** information to **all** personnel at **all** times, develop a climate where all faculty members are willing to ask for (and expect to receive) information as they deem necessary.

FIGURE 1

# Keys to a Productive Department

Second, build understanding and create acceptance for department decisions. As stated earlier, this does not require a department meeting to be held every time a decision is made. It does, however, require a trust to develop among your faculty that they will be consulted and allowed to impact decisions when pertinent to their interests.

**Conflict**

Conflict, controversy and disagreement are essential, but must not become dysfunctional to department success. Explore your faculty's interests and strive to satisfy their needs through collaborative solutions. Encourage this climate informally, constantly and among all individuals in your department.

**Professional Development:**

Team effort absolutely depends upon capable, willing and competent faculty members. As team leader, your first priority must be the growth and development of yourself and of each individual staff and faculty member. Two simple rules apply.

1. Unleashing individual potential requires conscious challenge and specific encouragement.
2. Meaningful growth is best achieved through active involvement in accomplishing goals.

## Your Leadership Challenge

Team leadership adds the "passion" to collective team climate. Your preparation for providing team direction and support to your department is **individual** and **unique;** individual to you and your capabilities and unique to your faculty and department situation.

Building a positive and productive department requires conscious time, effort and desire. Approach this challenge with enthusiasm. Become more involved, expand your interests, seek and accept new ideas, and enjoy your new position as you inspire your faculty and staff to greater achievement.

## References

For a complete list of references see: Gmelch, W.H. and Miskin, V.D. (1993). Leadership Skills for Department Chairs. Bolton, MA: Anker Press.